

REMARKS

Claims 4-9 remain pending in the application. Claims 4-6 have been amended, and claims 10-12 have been cancelled. Reconsideration of the rejection and allowance of the pending application in view of the following remarks are respectfully requested.

As an initial matter, Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for indicating that claims 10-12 include allowable subject matter.

As another matter, Applicants note that the Examiner has not yet indicated whether the drawings filed on March 23, 2004 are acceptable. Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to indicate his acceptance of the drawings in the next Office communication.

Applicants also note that the Examiner has not yet acknowledged Applicants' claim for foreign priority, or receipt of the certified copy of the priority document, Japanese Application No. 2003-092203, which was filed on March 28, 2003, and upon which Applicants' claim for foreign priority is based. Applicants again request that the Examiner acknowledge, in the next Office communication, Applicants' claim for foreign priority and receipt of the certified copy of the priority document.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 4-9 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Sugimoto et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,927,683). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection for at least the following reasons.

In the Office Action, the Examiner indicated that claims 10-12 would be allowable if placed in independent form, including all of the limitations of the base claim (claims 4-6, respectively). Applicants have amended claim 4 to incorporate substantially all the features of claim 10, have amended claim 5 to incorporate substantially all the features

of claim 11, and have amended claim 6 to incorporate substantially all the features of claim 12. Accordingly, claims 10-12 have been cancelled.

For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 4-6 are in condition for allowance, and respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw the 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) rejections and allow claims 4-6.

Dependent claims 7-9 are also submitted to be in condition for allowance for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to independent claims 4-6.

In response to the Examiner's reasons for the indication of allowable subject matter, Applicants wish to clarify the record with respect to the basis for the patentability of claims in the present application. In this regard, while Applicants do not disagree with the Examiner's indication that certain identified features are not disclosed by the references, as noted by the Examiner, Applicants further wish to clarify that the claims in the present application recite a combination of features, and the basis for patentability of these claims is based on the totality of the features recited therein.

Based on the above, it is respectfully submitted that this application is now in condition for allowance, and a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Entry and consideration of the present amendment, reconsideration of the outstanding Office Action, and allowance of the present application and all of the claims therein are respectfully requested and now believed to be appropriate. Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present invention in condition for allowance and believe that they have now done so.

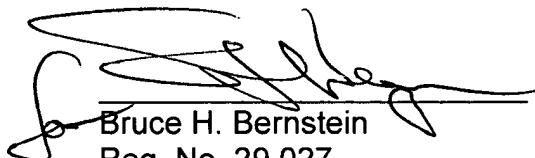
Any amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and

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which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should the Examiner have any questions or comments regarding this response, or the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
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